

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Las Cruces District Office

1800 Marquess St., Las Cruces, NM 88005

575-525-4300



## Organ Mountain Summer Series 2010

## On Friday June 25th at 7:00 pm



# "The Hermit" returns to La Cueva in Dripping Springs Natural Area

Las Cruces, NM

During the 1860s, La Cueva was home to a man by the name of Agostini-Justiniani, "El Ermitano", the Hermit. Agostini was born in 1800 to a wealthy Italian family. As a young man he studied to be a priest but for unknown reasons decided against taking his vows. He spent his life traveling, mostly by foot, through Europe, Mexico, South America, Cuba and the United States. In 1869 he made his home in La Cueva, a natural shelter in the Organ Mountains (presently located in Dripping Springs Natural Area).

In protection against his solitary lifestyle, he told his friends in Mesilla to watch out for his safety by saying, "I shall make a fire in front of my cave every Friday evening while I shall be alive. If the fire fails to appear, it will be because I have been killed. I shall bless you daily in my prayers." One Friday night in the April of 1869, the Hermit's fire was not seen. A group from Mesilla came up the mountain and found the Hermit lying face down, stabbed in the back.

On his gravestone in the Mesilla cemetery the following is written in Spanish:  
"Juan Maria Justiniano, Hermit of the Old and New World. He died the 17th of April, 1869, at 69 years and 49 years a hermit."

**Come to the La Cueva picnic area at 7:00 pm on June 25th, 2010 and meet this historical personality for a program that will last approximately an hour. Scott Green, Education Coordinator for The New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, will bring the character of the Hermit back to life in a living history reenactment program about this mysterious man.**

A \$3.00 vehicle pass will apply, but no extra fee will be charged for the program.

The Dripping Springs Natural Area is located 10 miles east of Las Cruces, on the west side of the Organ Mountains. From Exit 1 on Interstate 25, take University Avenue/Dripping Springs Road east to the end.

For further information, call McKinney Briske at BLM's office at 575-525-4334.

